

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 EURE-00 USIE-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 INR-07

NSAE-00 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 DHA-02 L-03 H-02 IO-11

SS-15 NSC-05 SSO-00 INRE-00 /062 W

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O R 261530Z FEB 76

FM AMEMBASSY BELGRADE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 5751

INFO AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY MADRID

AMCONSUL ZAGREB

C O N F I D E N T I A L BELGRADE 1305

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINS PFOR YO

SUBJ: MIHAJLOV AND POPOVIC CASES

REF: A. STATE 45364 (NOTAL) B. BELGRADE 1232 (NOTAL) C.
BELGRADE 1000

1. IN REPLY TO PRESS INQUIRIES SECRETARIAT FOR INFORMATION
STATED FEB 25 THAT MIHAJLO MIHAJLOV HAS BEEN
EXAMINED BY TWO DOCTORS THIS WEEK AND FOUND NOT TO BE IN
A DANGEROUS CONDITION.

2. MIHAJLOV'S HUNGER STRIKE HAS NOT BEEN REPORTED IN
YUGOSLAV PRESS. FEB 24 EDITION OF INTERNATIONAL HERALD
TRIBUNE, WHICH CARRIED FRONT PAGE ARTICLE BY
DUSKO DODER ABOUT MIHAJLOV, IS NOT AVAILABLE LOCALLY, AND GOY HAS
PRESUMABLY BANNED DISTRIBUTION, AS IT DOES WHEN FOREIGN
MEDIA CARRY UNFLATTERING STORIES ABOUT YUGOSLAVIA. EMBASSY
DID RECEIVE COPIES AIRMAILED FROM PARIS.

3. EMBASSY HAS LEARNED CONFIDENTIALLY THAT MIHAJLOV'S
WIFE IS SOURCE OF RECENT REPORTS ON HIS CONDITION. WE
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UNDERSTAND MIHAJLOV WALKED TO PRISON VISITING ROOM TO SEE HER,

AND IS THEREFORE AT LEAST AMBULATOR.

4. ANOTHER POLITICAL CASE IS LIKELY TO RECEIVE INTERNATIONAL ATTENTION NEXT WEEK. LAWYER SRDJAN POPOVIC WILL GO ON TRIAL MAR 1 IN VALJEVO FOR SPREADING FALSE INFORMATION DURING HIS DEFENSE OF A POLITICAL DISSIDENT. ACCORDING TO FEB 26 "POLITIKA", POPOVIC SENT LETTERS TO MANY YUGOSLAV LAWYERS CHARGING THAT HIS INDICTMENT HAS DAMAGED THE RIGHTS OF ALL DEFENSE LAWYERS. IN RESPONSE, "POLITIKA" REPORTS LOCAL EQUIVALENT OF BAR ASSOCIATION AND LAWYER'S CELL OF LEAGUE OF COMMUNISTS IN BELGRADE HAVE CIRCULATED STATEMENT WHICH URGES CAUTION IN BRINGING CHARGES AGAINST LAWYERS, BUT DENIES POPOVIC'S ALLEGATION AND ATTACKS HIM IN TURN. IT CONDEMNS HIS BEHAVIOR AFTER BEING INDICTED AND PARTICULARLY "HIS ADDRESSING THOSE ABROAD". THE STATEMENT CHARGES THAT POPOVIC HAS CREATED A FALSE PICTURE OF THE POSITION OF DEFENSE LAWYERS AND DAMAGED THE LEGAL PROFESSION AND THE COMMUNITY.

5. COMMENT: TREATMENT OF DISSIDENTS PROMISES TO TARNISH IF NOT BLACKEN YUGOSLAVIA'S INTERNATIONAL REPUTATION, AS IT HAS IN THE CASE OF THE SOVIET UNION. WE BELIEVE CRITICISM BY DEMOCRATIC SOCIALISTS OR CP'S IN WEST WOULD PARTICULARLY STING AND MIGHT BE EFFECTIVE IN HELPING MIHAJLOVS AND POPOVICS OF YUGOSLAVIA. SWEITZER

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: HEALTH, POLITICAL PRISONERS, DISSIDENT FACTIONS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 26 FEB 1976
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: coburnhl
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1976BELGRA01305
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D760072-0828
From: BELGRADE
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1976/newtext/t19760212/aaaaajlf.tel
Line Count: 87
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION EUR
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 76 STATE 45364
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: coburnhl
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 20 APR 2004
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <20 APR 2004 by greeneet>; APPROVED <11 AUG 2004 by coburnhl>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
04 MAY 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: MIHAJLOV AND POPOVIC CASES
TAGS: PINS, PFOR, SHUM, YO, (MIHAJLOV, MIHAJLOV), (POPOVIC, SRDJAN)
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 04 MAY 2006